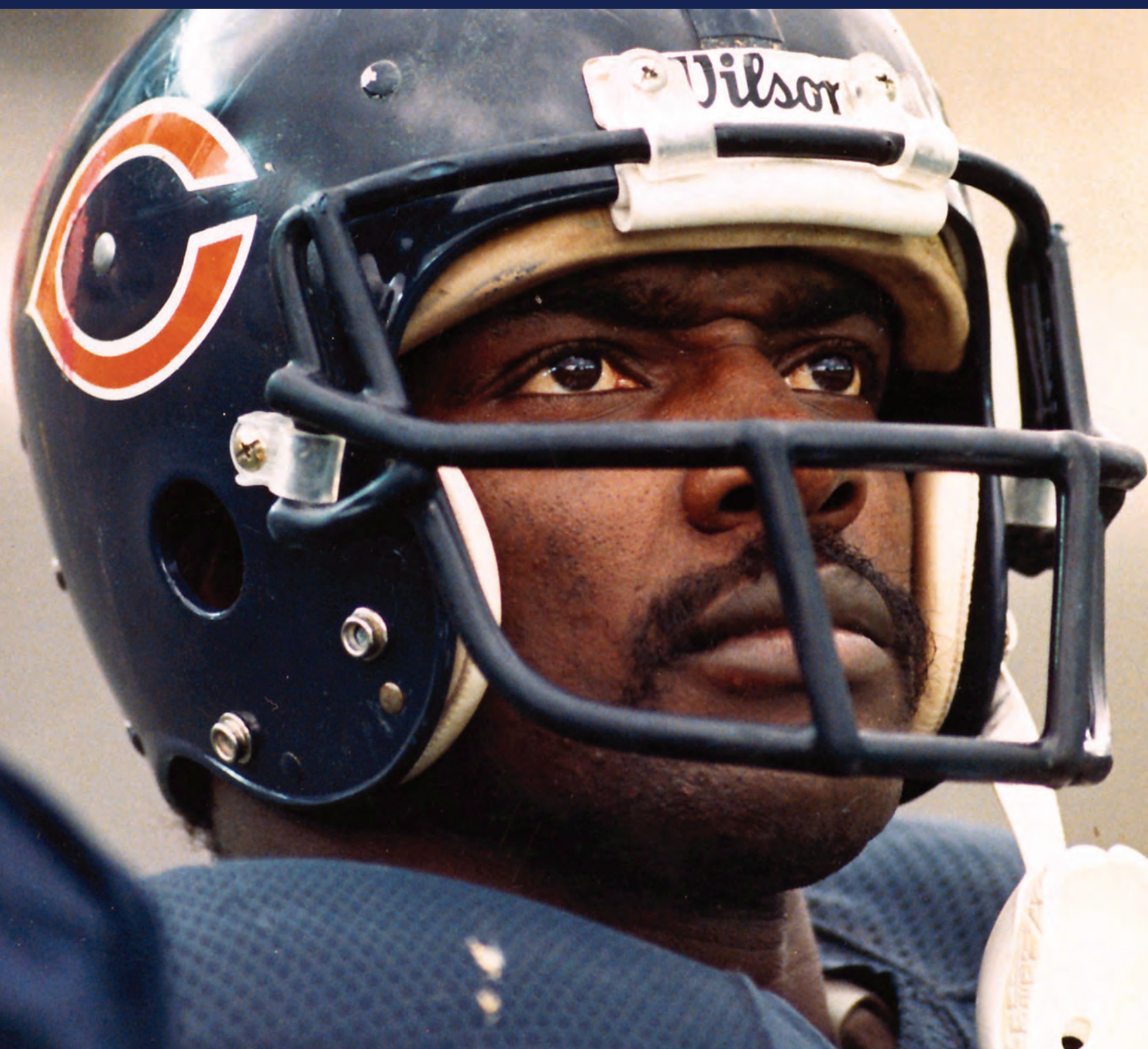


THE *Chicago Tribune* BOOK OF THE

CHICAGO BEARS

A DECADE-BY-DECADE HISTORY







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THE 1920s A GAME GROWS UP

George Halas didn't invent pro football but on Sept. 17, 1920, he sat on a running board at a Hupmobile showroom in Canton, Ohio, representing the Decatur Staleys when the forerunner to the National Football League was formed. Franchise fee: \$100. Play-for-pay football wanted to outgrow its reputation as a disorganized pastime for vagabond athletes. Halas had graduated from Chicago's Crane Tech high school and the University of Illinois and injured a hip playing baseball briefly with the New York Yankees. So he got a job in the bridge design department of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad. But his first love was football and he recalled the words of Illinois coach Robert Zuppke: "Just when I teach you fellows how to play football, you graduate and I lose you." The Staleys moved to Chicago in 1921 at the suggestion of sponsor A.E. Staley, who paid Halas \$5,000 to keep his starch-making business in the news for one year. The Staleys played in Cubs Park and won the 1921 league title before Halas changed the name to the Bears. In 1925, Halas signed Illinois running back Red Grange for \$100,000 for a nationwide barnstorming tour to convince the public that pro football was as exciting as the far more popular college game. Pro football would have growing pains, including a reduction from 22 to 12 teams by the end of the 1920s, but the dreams of Halas and others had become reality.



Red Grange on the ice wagon at Wheaton, Ill., circa Aug. 13, 1926. Grange worked as an ice delivery man during his summers off from college.

Red Grange

THE 'ICEMAN' COMETH

77 BACK

1925, 1929–34

In the summer of 1920, a Wheaton teenager named Harold Grange, son of the local police chief, for the sixth consecutive year spent the majority of his waking vacation hours hauling massive blocks of ice from door to door in his adopted hometown. Grange was a budding star on every team the local high school fielded, but this was back-breaking work.

“An iceman’s job,” he recalled in his 1953 autobiography, “The Red Grange Story,” “is a rough, tough, bruising business.”

Grange had landed the summer job out of grammar school, when local businessman Luke Thompson offered a dollar to any schoolboy who could hoist a 75-pound frozen block onto his shoulder. To Thompson’s surprise, Grange met the challenge. To Grange’s surprise, that dollar would prove to be a mere start. For the next eight years, Grange wrote, summers would mean working on Thompson’s ice truck for 14 hours a day, from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., “six days a week.”

Besides the \$37.50 a week, a nice sum for the otherwise poor son of a small town policeman, the young Grange found that his work humping ice around town was terrific training for his burgeoning career as a football standout.

It also almost ended it.

With some frequency, he recalled in “The Red Grange Story,” Grange had inflicted a variety of minor wounds on himself. Ice picks and ice tongs, the tools of the trade, had pierced his skin. Blocks had tumbled from his grip onto his feet and toes, the very foundations of his eventual dash into legend.

“None of these mishaps were serious, however,” he wrote, “except one.”

Grange had committed himself to a risky habit of leaping onto the moving ice truck as it pulled away from one home on the way to the next. However, on this particular afternoon before his junior year at Wheaton High, the handle of the truck broke off as he tried to grab on. Grange told his co-writer Ira Morton that he was launched to the street, where a back tire of the truck rolled over his left leg just above the knee. Six thousand pounds of ice, the vehicle’s massive cargo that day, pressed down upon him. For a brief,

breath-taking moment, he wrote, the attending doctor thought amputation might be in order.

This initial prognosis proved to be in error, or at the very least just a worst-case scenario. However, he was bedridden for the next month, given a 50 percent chance of returning to his prior self.

“Fate was kind,” though, Grange wrote. “By fall I was well enough to report for football.”

His left leg suffered from numbness for the rest of his days.

Harold “Red” Grange, football’s first superstar who carved his legend at Illinois and later with the NFL’s upstart Chicago Bears, was born on June 13, 1903, in Forksville, Pa., an obscure village of about 190 where men worked almost exclusively in the local lumber industry, among them a well-muscled lumberjack and family man named Lyle Grange.

“My father was a man for a kid to brag about,” Red wrote.

Lyle stood more than 6 feet tall and weighed more than 200 pounds, his son recalled, a hulking frame in the turn-of-the-century heartland that earned him the foreman’s position for all three lumber camps owned by state senator Charles W. Sones.

Years before his encounter with an ice truck, Red suffered his first sports injury, a makeshift pole-vaulting mishap that busted a pair of ribs. But he also recalled afternoons spent in the backyard cornering his dog, Jack, then marveling as the canine inevitably shimmied and shifted his way from such precarious spots.

“He was unquestionably the greatest open-field runner I ever saw,” Grange wrote, “and I learned things from him I never forgot.”

Tragedy soon interrupted this near-utopian existence. Red Grange was 5. Accounts differ as to the exact details of the demise of Sadie Grange, mother of Red and three other children, with some attributing it to typhoid, others to pneumonia, still others, likely, to some other malady all-too-common to an era before the emergence of modern medicine. Sadie’s death left Lyle Grange alone with four children to raise. The young widower left northeastern Pennsylvania and





Above: Archie MacKinney, a student at Wheaton College, left, and Red Grange train for football season, circa Aug. 13, 1926.

Left: Steve Schimititisch, Red Grange, second from left, Eddie Tryon, third from left, and George Pease, circa Sept. 9, 1926, of the newly formed New York Yankees. The Yankees were part of the American Football League, which lasted only one year. Grange left the Bears to take part in the new league, but he came back to the team in 1929 and remained a Bear until 1934.

In 1967, Bears founder George Halas wrote a series of stories in the Tribune entitled “That’s the Way the Ball Bounces,” recounting the birth of professional football and his role in the growth of the game. This story is constructed of edited excerpts from that series.

In his own words

BY GEORGE HALAS

Banquet toastmasters frequently introduce me as “the man who has been in pro football since its very beginning, George Halas.”

This is not true. The first professional football game was played at Latrobe, Pa., on Aug. 31, 1895, between the local YMCA and a team from nearby Jeannette.

My old friend Jim Conzelman, ex-coach of the Chicago Cardinals, contends I played in that inaugural contest at Latrobe under an assumed name.

This also is not true. I was six months old in 1895 and living quietly with my parents in Chicago.

I am still amazed that I ever got into pro football in the first place. Baseball was my favorite sport during my high school days at Crane Tech in Chicago and I also made more base hits than tackles at the University of Illinois. In fact, I played only one full season at right end for the Illini as a senior in 1917. A fractured jaw sabotaged my sophomore year and a broken leg kept me on the bench most of the '16 season.

But I batted a healthy .350 over three seasons as a right fielder for the Illini baseball team and a scout named Bob Connery recommended me to the New York Yankees. World War I was in progress, so I served a 14-month hitch with the navy before reporting to Manager Miller Huggins at the Yankees' spring training camp in Jacksonville, Fla., in March, 1919.

Huggins put me right to work against the Brooklyn Dodgers in an exhibition game. On my first time at bat, I faced Rube Marquard, the great lefthander

who had set a major league record of 19 consecutive victories. Marquard had a dandy curve, but I figured Rube wouldn't risk an arm injury by throwing a curve against a rookie so early in the spring. So, I dug in and looked for his fastball.

It was a good guess. Marquard came down the middle with his fast one and I banged it on a line into left center. The ball rolled all the way to the fence and I legged it all the way to third, beating the throw with a long hook slide.

That spectacular slide was the start and finish of my baseball career. The jar of hitting the brick-hard clay at third base injured my right hip. I never could run at full speed after that. The Yanks released me about midseason and I finished up the 1919 season with St. Paul in the American Association, then returned home to Chicago and went to work as an engineer in the bridge department of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad.

A few weeks after I joined the C.B.&Q., the management of the Hammond (Ind.) Pros, an independent football club, offered me \$100 to play a Sunday afternoon exhibition game against Jim Thorpe and the Canton Bulldogs. Both the money—more than twice my weekly railroad salary—and the opportunity to play against Thorpe, the famous Carlisle Indian star, were irresistible. I signed up.

**That's the
Way the
Ball
Bounces**

In the early 1900s pro football grew up in the small towns of Ohio and Pennsylvania. The best clubs were concentrated in

the Akron-Canton-Massillon triangle. Players often arrived in town on the Sunday morning train, held a brief meeting in some hotel room to agree on a set of signals, played the game in the afternoon and departed on the evening train. It was a great way to pick up a quick \$100. The lineups of those early clubs boasted outstanding stars who later became big-name college coaches—Knut Rockne, Jock Sutherland, Tuss McLaughry, Lou Little, Gus Dorais and Greasy Neale, to name a few.

But pro football was still a small-town sport when I started rounding up players for the Staley Starchmakers in the spring of 1920. I made the circuit of Midwest campuses, offering a package deal which included a year-round job at the Starchworks plus a share of the profits from the gate receipts.

Bears' Beginning in Chicago: No Writer Covered 1st Game

Meanwhile, there remained the necessity of arranging a schedule. I started corresponding with other independent clubs for dates and finally suggested, in a letter to Ralph Hay, manager of the Canton Bulldogs, it might be a good idea to form a league. Hay discussed the idea with Stan Cofall of the Massillon Tigers, a former Notre Dame star, and they finally called the Sept. 17 meeting in Hay's automobile agency at which the National Football League was founded.

Our Starchmakers won 12 games against one defeat in 1920 and claimed the pro football championship. The Chicago Cardinals edged us 7 to 6, but we whipped them in a return game, 10 to 0. I would like to report our success was due primarily to my coaching prowess, but this scarcely was the case.

Actually, our success was due almost entirely to a decision by the owner of the Starchworks. Mr. A. E. Staley decreed our players could work out two hours a day while drawing full salary on company time. As a result, we were the first professional team ever to hold daily practice sessions.

At season's end, we divided the gate receipts evenly among our squad members. Each player received \$1,900.

A few weeks after I deposited that \$1,900 share of the season's receipts in the bank, a depression hit the country and forced Mr. Staley to curtail his company athletic programs. He called me into his office.

"George," he said, "I know you're more interested in football than the starch business, but we simply can't underwrite the team's expense any longer. Why don't you move the team up to Chicago? I think pro football can go over in a big way there—and I'll give you \$5,000 to help you get started. All I ask is that you continue to call the team 'The Staleys' for one season."

It took me a few moments to comprehend the overwhelming generosity of Mr. Staley's offer. He was giving me the Staley franchise. Not only giving it, he was paying me \$5,000 to accept it!

Recently, I mentioned this story to a man who is a member of a group which paid more than \$10 million for a National Football League franchise. He just shook his head,

The morning after Mr. A.E. Staley asked me to take over the Decatur franchise and move the Starchmakers into Chicago, I hopped a train for the Loop to talk to Bill Veeck Sr., president of the Chicago Cubs, about

the possibility of playing our games in Wrigley Field.

Veeck, an ex-sportswriter, was enthusiastic. "Think of all the people who work on Saturday and can't attend college games," he said. "They'll jump at the chance to see pro games if you play on Sunday afternoon."

Our Wrigley Field debut against Rochester attracted about 8,000 fans, and we rallied for a touchdown in the final minutes to win 16 to 13. None of the Chicago papers sent sportswriters to cover the game, so we hired a publicity man to turn out a story for \$10.

After whipping Rochester, we racked up a seven-game winning streak before encountering the unbeaten but twice tied Buffalo All-Stars. In order to stimulate the Wrigley Field box office, this confrontation was billed as a battle for the "world championship" even though neither team had completed its regular season.

Buffalo beat us 7 to 6, but fortunately schedule commitments were decidedly elastic in those days, and I immediately made arrangements to play the All-Stars a return game two Sundays later.

This second "world championship" battle with Buffalo attracted our biggest crowd of the season—more than 12,000 fans—to Wrigley Field. This time the Bears triumphed, 10 to 7, and clinched the National League title.

After counting the gate receipts from the 12,000-crowd finale, Dutch and I discovered we had almost broken even for the season. Our net loss amounted to \$71.63.

My mother was not impressed. She reminded me I had earned a civil engineering degree at Illinois and once was gainfully employed in the bridge department of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy.

"Go back to the railroad, George," she urged, "it's steady work."

Instead of going back to the railroad, we changed our name from the Staleys to the Chicago Bears. In '22, we added two great players to our roster—tackle Ed Healey from Rock Island and guard Hunk Anderson from Notre Dame. Despite this extra strength, we lost our title punch, finishing in second place three consecutive years from '22 through '24. Financially, we just about broke even.

1930s

HIGHLIGHTS

1930

Following a disappointing 1929 season, George Halas steps down as head coach and hands the job to Ralph Jones. The Bears sign University of Minnesota star Bronko Nagurski.

BEARS' BATTLE WITH SPARTANS MOVED INDOORS

1932

Cold weather on Dec. 18 renders Wrigley Field unplayable, so the Bears and the Portsmouth Spartans play the league's first-ever postseason game indoors at Chicago Stadium on an 80-yard field. The Bears win 9-0 to take the championship. Later that year, co-owner Dutch Sternaman sells his share of the team to Halas.

Nov. 5, 1933

The Bears' 16-game winning streak ends with a 10-0 loss to Boston.

Dec 17, 1933

In the NFL's first matchup of division winners, the Bears edge the Giants 23-21 behind 11 points from rookie kicker Jack Manders.

1933

Halas replaces Jones as head coach. The NFL splits into two divisions for the first time.

Dec. 2, 1934

Beattie Feathers, a rookie out of the University of Tennessee, makes his Bears debut and leads the NFL in rushing with 1,004 yards, the first player to reach the 1,000-yard mark in a season.

1930

1931

1932

1933

1934

OVERFLOW CROWD TO SEE ALL-STARS BATTLE BEARS FRIDAY
AMONG LEADING ACTORS IN FOOTBALL'S GREATEST SHOW

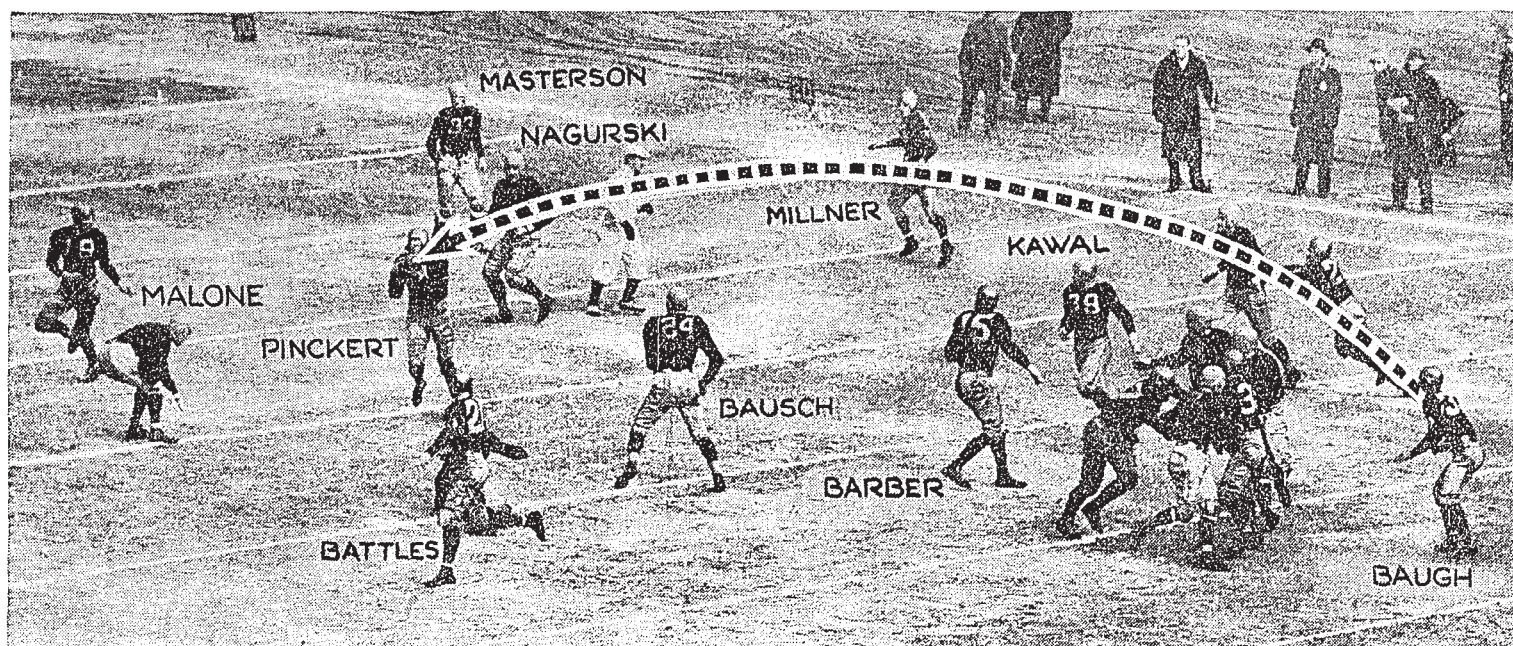
**BEWARE, ALL YOU
COLLEGE STARS,
OF BEARS' BACKS!**

**Crashing Nagurski Rates
as Enemy No. 1.**

Aug. 31, 1934

The first matchup between college all-stars and the reigning NFL champs is held at Soldier Field. A crowd of more than 79,000 sees the Bears and the All-Stars battle to a 0-0 tie.

Here's That Redskin Passing Attack That Won Championship



Sammy Baugh, Washington's great forward pass thrower, lives up to advance notices. Here is Sammy making a toss to Ernie Pinckert for a eighteen yard gain in the first quarter of yesterday's game with the Chicago Bears at Wrigley field.

Baugh's passing was the deciding factor in the Redskins' 28 to 21 victory which gave them the National Professional league championship. Three of Washington's four touchdowns were scored on passes thrown by Baugh. He completed 18 out of 33.

Dec. 9, 1934

In the famous "sneaker" game, the Bears squander a 10-3 lead at the half and fall to the Giants 30-13 at the Polo Grounds in the NFL title game. The Giants change to sneakers at halftime and run the previously undefeated Bears into the ground, outscoring them 27-3 in the second half and ending their 18-game winning streak.

Dec. 12, 1937

Behind Sammy Baugh's three TD passes, Washington defeats the Bears 28-21 in the NFL championship game.

1935

1936

1937

1938

1939

Dec. 30, 1934

BEARS LEAD PRO TEAMS; ATTRACT 483,020 TO GAMES

Professional football, ten years ago an orphan scorned, clamoring for recognition as a big league sport, reached its majority in 1934 when nearly 1,000,000 fans attended fifty-eight games in the National league championship race.

The outstanding attraction in the league was Chicago's Bear eleven, which played to 483,020 persons, including the 80,000 who saw the two time world's champions tie the College All-Stars at Soldiers' field, 0 to 0. The largest attendance at a league game, 46,600, saw the Bears defeat the New York Giants, 10 to 9, in the Polo Grounds. The same teams drew 35,800 for the championship game at the Polo Grounds when the Giants defeated the Bears, 30 to 13.

Bears Sign Joe Stydahar, Tackle Star

1936

In the first official draft of college players, the Bears select tackle Joe Stydahar from the University of West Virginia with the seventh overall pick. Stydahar goes on to become a Hall of Famer.

1939

The Bears acquire Sid Luckman, a quarterback from Columbia University who would become the leading passer in team history.

IT'S LUCKMAN'S LUCKY DAY; HE SIGNS WITH BEARS



BEARS WIN PRO TITLE, 73-0

George McAfee (5) runs the famous "T-Formation" for a Bears touchdown during the fabled 73-0 victory over the Washington Redskins on Dec. 8, 1940.

BEARS WIN WORLD FOOTBALL TITLE, 73 TO 0

ROUT REDSKINS WITH PARADE OF 11 TOUCHDOWNS

Set National League
Scoring Record.

A Massacre

CHICAGO (73).	WASHINGTON (0).
Nowaksey	L. P. Masterson
Stydahar	L. T. Wilkin
Fortmann	L. G. Farman
Turner	C. G. Tliehenn
Mason	R. G. Silvinski
Artos	R. T. Barber
Wilson	R. E. Malone
Luckman	Q. B. Krause
Nolling	L. H. Baugh
McAfee	R. H. Justice
Osmanski	F. B. Johnston
Chicago	21 7 26 19-73
Washington	0 0 0 0-0

Touchdowns—Osmanski, Luckman, Maniaci, Kavanaugh, Turner, Pool, Nolling, McAfee, Clark (2), Farnigilletti.

Points after touchdowns—Manders, Snyder (2), Martinevich, Plasman, Stydahar, Maniaci.

Perfection is difficult to achieve, even to approach, in football or in any phase of life.

But on the sunny afternoon of Dec. 8, 1940, in Washington, a Bears team quarterbacked by second-year pro Sid Luckman reached perhaps as close to perfection as any team before or since.

With Luckman operating the new T-formation that coach George Halas had installed and hired him to direct, the Bears won the National Football League championship, beating the Washington Redskins 73-0.

Ten different Bears scored the team's 11 touchdowns. Late in the game, officials asked Halas if he would please run or pass on extra-point tries. The supply of footballs was running low due to PAT's kicked into the stands.

Many years after the game, Luckman recalled, "That was the greatest football game ever played. Everything we did was right. Everything they did was wrong."

Early in the game, Redskins quarterback Sammy Baugh hurled a long pass to Charlie Malone, who was open behind the Bears' defense. Malone dropped the ball.

"Would the outcome have been different if Malone caught that pass?" Baugh was asked.

"Yeah," Baugh replied. "The score would have been 73-7."

"The remarkable thing about that game," recalled Bears Hall of Fame halfback George McAfee on Sunday night, "was that Washington beat us 7-3 just a few weeks earlier.

"We were an angry bunch of Bears. The Washington owner (George Marshall) said in the paper that we were crybabies, and Halas put the clippings up in our locker room.

"Sid was very quick and smart. He was friendly and cheerful to us, a great guy. Of course, he had to be. We blocked for him."



Charlie Malone, Washington Redskins end, taking 42 yard pass from Sammy Baugh in closing second of first half of game yesterday. He nearly scored on play.

"That was the greatest football game ever played. Everything we did was right. Everything they did was wrong."

—QUARTERBACK SID LUCKMAN

1 BEARS BEAT RAMS, 31 TO 13

2 BEARS BEAT REDSKINS, 35 TO 21 3 BEARS WHIP LIONS, 24-7 4 BEARS, BEHIND AT HALF, 14-0, BEAT EAGLES, 49 TO 14

5 BEARS WHIP CARDS, 34-24

Come from Behind
3 Times to Win.

That Was Close!

6 BEARS WIN, 33 TO 14; PLAY FOR TITLE SUNDAY

7 BEARS ROUT GIANTS, 37-9; KEEP LEAGUE TITLE

8 BEARS SMASH PACKERS IN 4TH PERIOD; WIN, 44 TO 28 SMASH ACROSS 4 TOUCHDOWNS

9 BEARS TAKE TO AIR FOR VICTORY OVER RAMS, 21-7 10 BEARS ROUT CARDINALS, 41-14 IN CLOSING HALF

11 BEARS OVERPOWER GIANTS, 26-7

Still on Throne

12 BEARS WHIP EAGLES, 45-14; HALAS' LAST GAME

13 BEARS BEAT LIONS, 16-0 BEARS CRUSH DODGERS, 35-0;

15 BEARS WHIP PACKERS, 38-7; NEAR WEST TITLE 20TH STRAIGHT

16 BEARS BEAT LIONS; CLINCH WESTERN TITLE

17 BEARS ROUT RAMS, 47-0; 4TH LEAGUE SHUTOUT

They're Good!

18 BEARS WHIP CARDINALS, 21 TO 7; NOW FOR TITLE GAME

1941-42: Another record winning streak

The 1941 season followed the euphoria of the Bears' 73-0 championship win over Washington in 1940 that gave rise to the "Monsters of the Midway." The T-formation was now perfected. With the passing of Sid Luckman to Ken Kavanaugh and Dick Plasman and the running of George McAfee, Norm Standlee and Hugh Gallarneau, the 1941 team went 10-1.

Its only loss was to Green Bay, but the most memorable game was Dec. 7 at Comiskey Park against the cross-town rival Cardinals when the announcement of Pearl Harbor was made. Two weeks later, only 13,341 showed up for the championship game against the Giants at Wrigley Field, which the Bears won easily 37-9.

Before the 1942 season, 112 of the league's 346 players had been drafted into the armed forces. The Bears turned to fourth-stringer Gary Famiglietti, who led the team in rushing during an 11-0 regular season in which the Bears outscored opponents 376-84. The average margin of victory for the 1941-42 Bears was a whopping 24.1 points.

Luckman was still playing, as were George Musso, Bulldog Turner and Danny Fortmann among the 10 Hall of Fame Bears who were part of the streaks. Guard-tackle Musso was the only player around for both. In Musso's 12 seasons between 1933 and 1944, the Bears were 108-28-6.

Midway through the 1942 season, Halas left to rejoin the Navy and turned the team over to co-coaches Luke Johnsos and Hunk Anderson. Undefeated entering the championship game in Washington and again winners of 18 in a row, the Bears lost 14-6 to a Redskins team vowing revenge for the 73-0 game.

"We were beginning to think of ourselves as unbeatable," Luckman said. Of course, he added, "Coach Halas would never have allowed that."

The Bears were two championship-game losses away from two perfect seasons in 1934 and 1942. Had it not been for the 16-14 loss to Green Bay in mid-1941, the Bears would have won 27 straight between 1940 and '42.

THE SECOND 18-GAME STREAK

1941

11/9 **W**, 31-13
vs Cleveland Rams

11/16 **W**, 35-21
vs Washington Redskins

11/23 **W**, 24-7
at Detroit Lions

11/30 **W**, 49-14
at Philadelphia Eagles

12/7 **W**, 34-24
at Chicago Cardinals

12/14 **W**, 33-14
vs Green Bay Packers (playoff game)

12/21 **W**, 37-9
vs New York Giants (championship game)

1942

9/27 **W**, 44-28
at Green Bay Packers

10/4 **W**, 21-7
at Cleveland Rams

10/11 **W**, 41-14
vs Chicago Cardinals

10/18 **W**, 26-7
vs New York Giants

10/25 **W**, 45-14
vs Philadelphia Eagles

11/1 **W**, 16-0
vs Detroit Lions

11/8 **W**, 35-0
at Brooklyn Dodgers

11/15 **W**, 38-7
vs Green Bay Packers

11/22 **W**, 42-0
at Detroit Lions

11/29 **W**, 47-0
vs Cleveland Rams

12/6 **W**, 21-7
at Chicago Cardinals

12/13 **L**, 6-14
at Washington Redskins (playoff game)

Stunned!

REDSKINS END BEARS' 3 YEAR FOOTBALL REIGN, 14 TO 6

1940s



1940s



Bronko Nagurski scores the Bears' first touchdown in their 41-21 championship-game victory over the Washington Redskins at Wrigley Field.

Aerial view of Wrigley Field during the Nov. 17, 1963, Bears-Packers game, which the Bears won 26-7.





BUTKUS: MAESTRO OF MAYHEM

- » Born Dec. 9, 1942 in Chicago
- » Two-time All-American at University of Illinois, playing center and linebacker
- » Drafted by Bears No. 3 overall in 1965
- » Led Bears in tackles for eight straight seasons (1965–72)
- » Had 22 career interceptions and 25 fumble recoveries
- » Returned 12 kickoffs and caught two passes for extra points
- » Had second career as TV and movie actor

“I’m gettin’ worked over, Dick,” Buffone told Butkus in the huddle. “Give him a little shove my way,” Butkus chuckled. Sanders never bothered Buffone again.

Toward the end of his career, Butkus’ reputation for violence and attempted mayhem had become so great that a reporter felt compelled to ask him if he really was as mean as his press clippings indicated.

“I’m not so mean,” Butkus said. “I wouldn’t ever go out to hurt anybody deliberately. Unless it was, you know, important—like a league game or something.”

It was taken for granted by Chicago fans who had followed Butkus’ impressive career from Vocational through the U. of I. that Halas would go all out to acquire Butkus. But why Sayers, who had no such Chicago connection and was being hotly pursued by Lamar Hunt, wealthy owner of the AFL Kansas City Chiefs? Halas knew a Butkus-Sayers tandem was a pricey first round, but he wanted Sayers badly.

“I couldn’t stand to let Gale go elsewhere after I saw him make a totally unique move in a Kansas game film,” Halas explained. “Gale started one way, left his feet and seemed to change direction in the air. When he landed, he was running the opposite direction. When I saw that move, I knew we had to get that young man.”

The 1965 season was an exhilarating time to follow the Bears. As Sayers dazzled the pro football world with his unbelievable moves, Butkus began to pump up the defense and build his legendary image.

Halas brought Sayers along slowly. Sayers started for the first time in the third game of the regular season, scoring both Bears touchdowns in a loss to Green Bay. A week later he ran 80 yards with a screen pass and threw a TD pass against the Rams. Seven days later he scored four TDs as the Bears beat Minnesota.

But the big one was still ahead. On Dec. 12, playing in the mud in Wrigley Field, the Kansas Comet scored

SAYERS: THE ‘KANSAS COMET’

- » Born May 30, 1943 in Wichita, Kansas.
- » Two-time All-American at Kansas University, led the nation in yards from scrimmage in 1963
- » Drafted by Bears No. 4 overall in 1965
- » Tied record with six touchdowns in a game on Dec. 12, 1965
- » Scored 22 touchdowns in 1965, a rookie record
- » Led NFL in rushing twice (1966, 1969)
- » Suffered serious right knee injury in 1968; injured left knee in 1970
- » Played only 68 games as a pro
- » Elected into Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1977 at age 34, youngest player ever inducted

a record-tying six touchdowns as the Bears whipped the San Francisco 49ers 61-20. Sayers could have had a seventh TD late in the game if Halas hadn’t taken him out with the Bears on the San Francisco 3-yard line.

“I had a sudden premonition that Gale would get hurt on the next play,” Papa Bear said.

Sayers continued his whirling-dervish pace until well into the 1968 campaign. In the ninth game that season, against the 49ers, he took a pitchout from Virgil Carter, ran to his left on a sweep and went down screaming after a low-rolling shoulder tackle by Kermit Alexander.

“It’s gone, Kermit, the knee is gone,” Sayers hollered. His right knee had been bent 90 degrees sideways, tearing all the ligaments. He underwent surgery the same day.

Sayers’ comeback the following year was incredible. Even without his old speed, he won his second NFL rushing title with 1,032 yards. Sayers’ longest rush that year, on a team that finished 1-13, was for only 28 yards.

An injury to Sayers’ other knee put a stop to his glittering career, which totaled less than five seasons of effective playing time. In 1977, at 34, Sayers became the youngest player ever elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Butkus, whose induction into the pro football shrine followed two years later, broke down several times during the ceremony as he acknowledged family members on hand in Canton, Ohio, to cheer him.

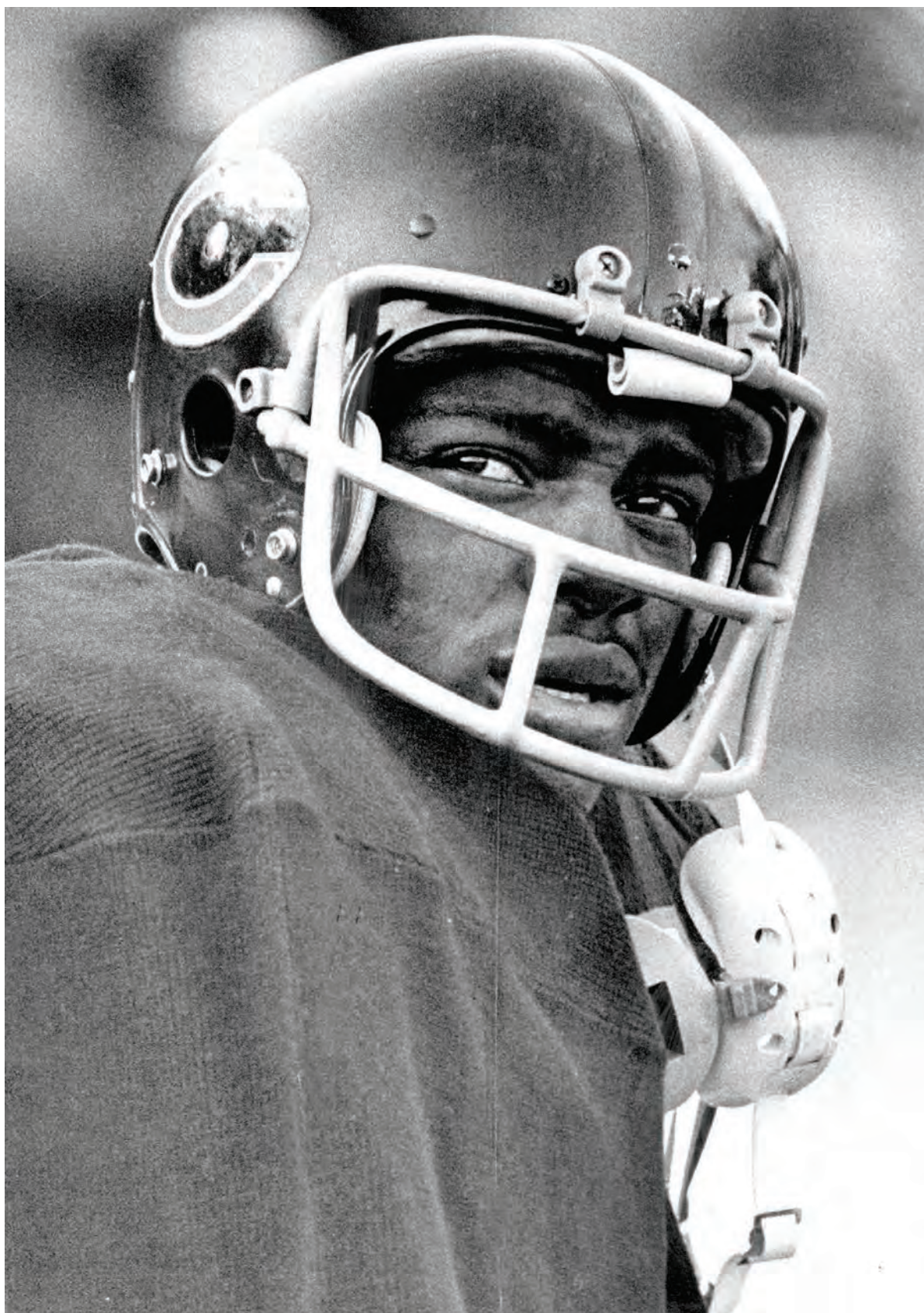
He ended his acceptance speech with these words:

“I consider being inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame as the top of my dream. For only on the top can I see the whole view. I can now see what I have done, and what I can do from now on. I have a new goal now, and that is simply to become a better husband, a better father and a better person.” 🍌

“I wouldn’t ever go out to hurt anybody deliberately. Unless it was, you know, important—like a league game or something.” —BUTKUS



Dick Butkus snarls at a referee during a pre-season game with the Minnesota Vikings on Sept. 17, 1969.



Walter Payton on the sidelines in December 1976.

Walter Payton

THE GREATEST BEAR

34 RUNNING BACK

1975–87

If sports provides metaphors for life, nothing rings truer than football's running back, carrying the ball, struggling to get ahead, needing the help of friends, overcoming obstacles and enemies, striving for goals, getting knocked down, bouncing up again and again until reaching the end zone, triumphant.

Nobody ever ran a football better than Walter Payton.

Because he did it for 13 years for the Chicago Bears, Payton's grip on Carl Sandburg's City of Big Shoulders was as strong as his handshake. His death in 1999 made those shoulders slump.

Because his exploits set magnificent athletic standards, his death seemed all the more unbelievable. Indestructibly reliable on the field, how could he be so human and vulnerable away from it?

Payton was Chicago's first hero of the superstar era, when the media spotlight first expanded athletic reality into 24-hour fantasy. He followed Ernie Banks and Bobby Hull and Gale Sayers and Dick Butkus and preceded Michael Jordan, who took fantasy to yet another level of imagination.

Payton stayed much closer to earth, by trade and personality. He captured the soul of a city with work habits and results that made steelworkers and hog butchers and ditch diggers proud.

Teammates remember not only his production, but his practices. No man ever played football harder and no child ever enjoyed it more. Often moody, more often playful, sometimes selfish, more often selfless, Payton never was absent. In 13 years he missed only one game, and went to his death unhappy about it because he believed his coaches underestimated his determination to ignore a painful ankle. He was only a rookie who would never again allow others to keep him from work.

Relentless in both his running and living styles, Payton's premature death shocked yet somehow fit his penchant for doing absolutely everything in a hurry.

His parents in Columbia, Miss., didn't allow him to play football until he reached high school, so he was content to play in the band. But he quickly caught up.

At Jackson State, Payton set collegiate records that no one quite appreciated because of the suspect nature of small-college competition. When the Bears had the No. 4 pick in 1975, Mel Kiper Jr. wasn't around to analyze the pro potential of a little-known prospect from a relatively unheralded Southern school.

The Bears were looking to make major changes after a 4-10 season in 1974. George Halas brought in Jim Finks from Minnesota as general manager. Finks then hired Jack Pardee as the Bears' new coach, replacing Abe Gbron. Finks knew he had plenty of work to do on the eve of his first draft with the Bears.

Said one scout: "They're so bad, they can take anybody and come up smelling like a rose."

Blessed with running backs from the time of Red Grange and Paddy Driscoll, the Bears found their stable empty in 1975. Spoiled by Bronko Nagurski and George McAfee and Beattie Feathers and Rick Casares, they were looking for the next Gale Sayers, whose electrifying NFL career was limited to 68 games by injury.

Chicago always preferred runners to passers. It is a city of linebackers and running backs, not receivers and quarterbacks. This is where pro football formed its roots and they run deep into the ground game. This is where football rarely strays from its basic elements—running and stopping the run. Leave the fancy passing to pretty boys and thin sprinters and warm climates and artificial turf; Chicago will keep its feet firmly planted in the dirt.

Finks, Pardee and college scout Jim Parmer all wanted a running back as the first rebuilding block of a team that no longer had Sayers to run or Dick Butkus to tackle.

Payton was setting college records at Jackson State. They were small-college records, but he was too good to miss or dismiss.

Parmer told Finks: "We can't make a mistake on this kid."

Finks needed to be convinced, but it didn't take a crusade. Pardee wanted to look carefully at the bigger Don Hardeman of Texas A & I, who was considered the top running back in the draft by many experts.

One man show

Super Walter's 275 sets rushing mark

Walter Payton in the 1977 was to the Bears' offense what Michael Jordan was to the 1990s Bulls.

On Nov. 20 of that year, in Soldier Field, Payton ran for 275 yards against the Minnesota Vikings, an NFL single-game record that stood for more than 20 years.

Imagine the kind of day he might have had if he had been feeling better.

"I had the flu. I was throwing up," Payton recalled. "I didn't care about 275 yards; I just wanted to get that game over with."

Payton broke O.J. Simpson's 1976 record of 273 yards on a bizarre 40th and final carry, an illustration of the Bears' offensive limitations.

"We didn't have anything else," Payton said. "Forty darn times. It was a rough day."

It always baffled quarterback Bob Avellini, who handed off 63 times and threw only six passes, completing 4 for 33 yards.

"How many backs carry 40 times a game?" Avellini asked. "We were so backward, I could have been Joe Namath and it didn't matter."

The Bears barely won the game, 10-7, sending one-season offensive coordinator

Sid Gillman into near depression.

"We only won 10-7," Gillman wailed. "One man gains 275 yards and we only scored 10 points."

Gillman, ironically, is in the Hall of Fame as one of football's great passing innovators. But by the second half of that season, Gillman had lost his influence and was an unhappy spectator wondering why coach Jack Pardee had never heard of a play-action pass.

Not until Payton broke a 58-yard run in the final five minutes did Simpson's record loom. That gave Payton 268 yards and gave the Bears a first down at the Vikings' 9-yard line. Fullback Robin Earl, a rookie replacing injured Roland Harper, ran for a yard. Payton got 3 on second down, and on third down Avellini lost a yard on a broken play.

"I ran off the field because I thought we were going to kick the field goal," Avellini said. "Jack said, 'No, run a sweep.' I said, 'Jack, it's fourth down.'"

On fourth and 6, Payton gained 4 yards. The Bears lost the ball on downs, but Payton set the record.

"I don't think Jack even had the record in mind," Avellini said.

What Pardee had in mind was winning. The Vikings had scored their only touchdown on a blocked punt.

"We were running on third and 8," guard Revie Sorey said. "We were explosive up and down the field. Didn't score a lot of TDs."

"What I remember about that game was seeing the back of Walter's jersey," left tackle Ted Albrecht said.

Albrecht and Dennis Lick were the tackles, Sorey and Noah Jackson the guards, Dan Peiffer the center and Greg Latta the tight end. Payton gained a career-high 1,852 yards that season and was the league's MVP.

"Latta had a phenomenal year, and Lick was like a bug strip. You couldn't shake him," Albrecht said.

With Minnesota's defense geared to stop touchdowns more than yardage, safety Paul Krause played so far back "he was off the screen" in film, Sorey remembered.

Earl, a 255-pounder, recalls joining the two pulling guards in a fearsome convoy. "Krause's eyes lit up like a saucer plate. Remember that moat in the bench area? I knocked Krause into the moat, and Noah said in the huddle, 'Walter's going to have a good day today.'"

And, in typical Payton style, he dished out a few hits of his own on his way to the record.

"It's similar to trying to rope a calf. It's hard enough to get your hands on him, and once you do, you wonder if you should have."

—VIKINGS CORNERBACK BOBBY BRYANT

PAYTON'S 275-YARD GAME

1st	13 carries	77 yards	0 TD
2nd	13 carries	67 yards	1 TD
3rd	8 carries	48 yards	
4th	6 carries	83 yards	
TOTAL	40 carries	275 yards	1 TD



“What I remember about that game was seeing the back of Walter’s jersey.”

—LEFT TACKLE TED ALBRECHT

“It was almost like he was a middle linebacker running around trying to run over as many defenders as he could,” safety Doug Plank said. “By the end of the day, he had run over everyone on the team at least once.”

Said Vikings cornerback Bobby Bryant: “It’s similar to trying to rope a calf. It’s hard enough to get your hands on him, and once you do, you wonder if you should have.”

Payton and friends thought he had a better game three weeks earlier in Green Bay when he piled up 117 yards in the first quarter and 162 by halftime. He finished with 205 after taking a seat with 11 minutes to play.

“When you rush for over 200 yards, most backs feel it’s time to take a break,” Sorey said.

During the 275-yard game, Albrecht remembers propping up Payton up in the huddle with receiver James Scott.

“He was so tired, pretty quiet, didn’t say a whole lot. I kept saying, ‘Historical day. This will be for all time,’” Albrecht said.

Less than 24 hours after the record-setting game—and despite a case of the flu—Payton was running scout plays to get the defense ready for Detroit. After watching film of his 275-yard performance, Payton said: “I noticed on certain plays I should have got more yardage.”



Mike Ditka

BORN TO BE A BEAR

89 TIGHT END

1961–66

HEAD COACH

1982–92

Mike Ditka laces conversations with disclaimers such as, “I don’t know if that’s good or bad,” or, “I don’t know if it’s right or wrong.”

He only knows how he feels. Sometimes, even he is not sure he likes it.

“I don’t condone everything I do,” he says.

Take it or leave it. Good or bad. Right or wrong. Ditka does not apologize; he warns.

He practices the adage: “If you’re a leader, lead. If you’re a follower, follow. Everybody else get out of the way.”

“I hate to lose,” said Ditka. “When I was a kid playing Little League baseball, boy I hated to lose. I cried. It just hurt my feelings to lose. I don’t like to lose. I’m not proud of that, but I just don’t like to lose.

“I don’t know how it came up.”

Neither did his parents, Charlotte and Mike Ditka of Aliquippa, Pa.

Mostly, they got out of the way.

“Give the credit where it’s due,” said his dad. “First to him and second to his mother. I would like to say I was out there and caught ball with him seven or eight hours a day, but that was a rarity.”

Instead, when the elder Ditka wasn’t working on the railroad, toiling in the Jones and Laughlin steel mill or tending to union affairs, he would watch his son play baseball.

One day, he witnessed a remarkable scene. Mike was catching and younger brother Ashton was pitching. Ashton walked “one, maybe two batters.” Mike ordered a conference on the mound and the two switched positions. This worked until the shortstop made an error. Mike switched to shortstop.

“The manager told me after the game, ‘Mr. Ditka, I don’t believe this.’

I said: ‘Tell me something. I don’t either,’” said Mr. Ditka.

“I was sitting in the stands tearing my hair out. Michael had a disposition that he always figured he wasn’t supposed to lose. If he hit the ball, he drove it 20 miles. If he missed it, you figured you had a broken bat at home plate.”

Ditka’s mother recalled that Mike’s uncle gave him

a full football uniform when he was 4 years old.

“Maybe he thought he should win because he had the outfit,” said Charlotte Ditka.

Hating to lose meant hating anyone else who didn’t hate to lose.

“I really believe this: If you accept defeat, then you’re going to be defeated a heckuva lot more than you’re going to win,” Ditka explained. “You can be gracious in defeat, but boy, I’ll tell you what, you can be gracious on the outside, but you better be doing flip-flops inside. If you’re not churning and turning, you’re going to go out and get your butt whipped next time out. That’s all there is to it. You’ll start accepting it.

“I’m not sure that isn’t what happened with the Bears for a while. They didn’t like losing, but it seemed to be a way of life, so they accepted it. You find ways to blow games. You find a way to blow a last-minute game in Minnesota just because those sons of guns have purple uniforms on. That’s bull. I don’t believe in that.”

For Ditka, hating to lose seems to be a stronger emotion than loving to win. It is more the attitude of an underdog than a bully.

“I was never a bully,” he said.

George Halas was the only man in the world who would have hired Mike Ditka to coach his football team.

“No question about it,” said Ditka. “Too many drawbacks. First of all, there’s an NFL image you have to be and maintain and I probably wasn’t it.”

Halas gave him the chance. Minnesota coach Bud Grant said it proved that it is who you know and not what you know.

Ditka drew a parallel to his idea to use William “the Refrigerator” Perry as a running back. Defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan wasn’t giving him a chance to play defensive tackle.

“The hilarious thing about this Perry thing is it’s kind of busted the staid image in the NFL that all running backs are slender, 6 feet tall, between 185 and 215 and built. This has made a farce out of that,” said Ditka.

“Every underdog in society relates to Perry.”

The image of Ditka as tempestuous bully must leave room for Ditka the careful compromiser. Ditka

Left: Mike Ditka gives a thumbs up after winning his 100th game on Dec. 8, 1991, against the Green Bay Packers at Soldier Field. The Bears won 27-3.

The Bears put an exclamation point on a magnificent season by trouncing the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XX.

No contest: Bears the best

NEW ORLEANS—This is as good as it gets. The Bears won the Super Bowl 46-10 in an awesome display of football encompassing all the joy and fury of an awesome season.

Their destruction of the New England Patriots was so complete

it went beyond Super Bowl proportions and recalled only the record 73-0 victory by the Bears over the Washington Redskins in the 1940 National Football League championship game.

The Bears have a tradition that transcends Super Bowls and

Sunday they ended years of frustration for their city and themselves and showed a nation they play even better than they talk or sing.

They simply blew your minds like they said they would.





Chicago fans cheer their heroes as the ticker-tape parade makes its way through an estimated 500,000 fans to a rally in Daley Plaza the day after the Bears won the Super Bowl in 1986.





Mike Singletary during a game against the Green Bay Packers on Sept. 16, 1990, at Lambeau Field. The Bears won 31-13.

"It could lead to two or three pre-snap changes," Fencik said. "The primary communicator of those changes was Mike Singletary. To be able to slap those guys around up front and communicate with the rest of us while you're trying to do your job, I don't think we really quite appreciated how difficult that was.

"The number of times he read a play based on a preset formation was amazing."

Also amazing was Singletary's ability to lead the diverse personalities of the 1980s Bears.

"There were a lot of guys who had strong opinions that were expressed often in the huddle," Fencik said. "It wasn't an easy job."

Singletary was the NFL's most valuable defensive player in 1985 and in 1988. He missed only two games

'SAMURAI MIKE'

- » Born October 9, 1958 in Houston
- » Two-time All-American at Baylor University
- » Drafted by Bears in second round (No. 38 overall) in 1981
- » NFL Defensive Player of the Year 1985, 1988
- » Recovered two fumbles in Super Bowl XX
- » Ranked either first or second on team in tackles for 11 straight seasons
- » Named to 10 consecutive Pro Bowl teams
- » Missed just two games in 12 seasons
- » Inducted into Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1998

in 12 years, started more games (172) than any Bear except Walter Payton and averaged more than eight tackles a game.

Singletary's youth in Houston inspires his motivational theme.

"Growing up in the ghetto, being told all my life, 'You don't have what it takes,' smallest out of 10 kids. Everybody said, 'I know you want to play football, but you're too small for that game.' Then, 'I know you want to be a middle linebacker in the NFL, but that's crazy.'"

After his retirement from playing, when he was preparing to be a coach, Singletary still studied film but didn't always like what he saw, especially when watching the Bears.

"It really hurts me because I see players who want to play and I see coaches who want to win. But somehow it seems they come up short or there's a missing element," he said. "I hurt when I see the other division teams doing what they're doing. There's no excitement here, like it's a dead town in football. I hate that."

He said he doesn't really miss playing, but he does occasionally identify. Last September, for example, he was ready for bed when he flicked on the TV and saw the Cardinals—who were coached by McGinnis at the time—battling the Cowboys in overtime.

"Man, I was up and running around saying, 'This is fantastic. This is great defense,' " he said. "I called Dave the next day and said, 'Coach, that's defense.' When I see people playing with their hearts, it's sort of like, 'I know that feeling.'"





Brian Urlacher

'THERE WASN'T ANYTHING
HE COULDN'T DO'

54 LINEBACKER

2000–12

When Brian Urlacher held up that navy blue jersey for the first time on that April day in 2000, his face a little pimply and his scalp covered with closely cropped blond hair, no one had any idea what 54 would come to represent.

After 13 seasons, it's hard to imagine anyone else ever wearing a Bears 54 jersey.

At one point those 54s were everywhere at Soldier Field, like flags at a Fourth of July parade.

Even in Urlacher's final season, when seemingly everyone in creation already had a 54, and when his level of play as the worst of his career, more 54 jerseys were sold than those of any other Bears player.

Those 54s will be worn en masse again one day, the day when he will be wearing a yellow jacket, standing beside a bronze bust and explaining his journey from Lovington, N.M., to Canton, Ohio.

Why did we buy 54? How could we not?

In many ways, he was one of us. He grew up the son of a single mother who worked three jobs to feed the family. Before playing in the NFL he worked in oil fields and lumberyards.

But in many other ways, he was one of a kind.

"If you drew up the perfect player, I don't know that you could have a better one," former Bears general manager Jerry Angelo said. "There wasn't anything he couldn't do. Physically, he could have started at three or four positions, and he could have returned kicks too."

He played safety at the University of New Mexico, and his first NFL coach, Dick Jauron, was convinced Urlacher could have been an NFL safety.

Jauron, who was part of the league for decades as a player and coach, said Urlacher was "more gifted than anybody I've ever been around."

Jauron remembered veteran Bears quarterback Chris Chandler warning young passers on the team not to test Urlacher on the seam route. With his long arms and his quick feet, you can't get the ball past him, Chandler warned.

"You can spend all your life coaching certain people,

and they still can't make certain plays," Jauron said. "Then a guy like Brian, he may go underneath the block, over the block, through the block. A play that would go for plus-8, or plus-70 against other players, he might run it down for minus-4—and he might do it four different ways."

Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers said Urlacher "revolutionized" the middle linebacker position.

"He was so good at running that Tampa-2 scheme," Rodgers said. "They had him play both the deep middle and then react to the short middle. He changed that position with his height and long levers and athleticism."

At 6-foot-4, 258 pounds, he ran a 4.5 40-yard dash. It was a rare combination of size, speed and athleticism with which he was blessed.

Quarterback Michael Vick was winless in five starts against Urlacher. He considered Urlacher the second-greatest nemesis of his career, behind only Julius Peppers, whom he battled when both were in the NFC South.

"I remember playing him in 2001," Vick said. "I came in as one of the fastest guys in the league. But he ran me down. I'll never forget being so beat up and tired from running from Brian."

In his prime, Urlacher played like a science fiction avatar from Pandora—bigger, faster and stronger than any human could be. But it wasn't just talent that made Urlacher special. Jauron talked about him being tough, smart, coachable and hard working.

Angelo has been around some great players, including Lawrence Taylor, Warren Sapp, Derrick Brooks and Peppers. He said Urlacher outworked all of them.

"Despite his gifts, he looked at himself like an over-achiever," Angelo said. "He had a rare work ethic, very rare, that enabled him to maximize his gifts. Brian did whatever he could to be great. He was so driven."

"People see the Adonis physique and think everything came easy to him. But nobody outworked him. That's how he gained the respect and trust from his peers and his coaches."

A MODERN 'MONSTER'

- » Born May 25, 1978 in Pasco, Wash.
- » All-American at University of New Mexico
- » Drafted by Bears in first round (No. 9 overall) in 2000
- » Named to 8 Pro Bowl teams
- » 22 career interceptions
- » Defensive Player of the Year, 2005
- » Retired as Bears' all-time leader in tackles with 1,179

Opposite: Brian Urlacher (54) in the season opening game against Green Bay in Lambeau Field on Sept. 10, 2006. The Bears won 26-0.



A view of Soldier Field during the Bears 31-13 loss to the Miami Dolphins on Nov. 5, 2006.







Above: Jay Cutler (6) is hit by Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict (55) as he slides on a run in the fourth quarter on Sept. 8, 2013 at Soldier Field. The Bears won the game, their season opener, 24-21.

Left: Brandon Marshall (15) looks to catch a pass as the Cardinals' Patrick Peterson grabs his arm in the first quarter of Chicago's 28-13 win at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Phoenix, Az., on Dec. 23, 2012.

THE HONOR ROLL CALL

Bears Retired Numbers

With a history that traces back to the game's earliest days—and more players in the Pro Football Hall of Fame than any other NFL team—it's no surprise the Bears also have retired several jersey numbers—14 of them.

Twelve of the 14 numbers retired by the Bears belong to Hall of Famers. The two exceptions are running backs Willie Galimore and Brian Piccolo. Galimore and teammate John “Bo” Farrington, both members of the 1963 championship team, were killed in a car accident during training camp in 1964. Piccolo, whose story was told memorably in the 1971 film “Brian’s Song,” died of cancer in 1970 at age 26.

The most recent number to be retired, Mike Ditka’s 89 in 2013, will be the last, which seems fitting for a man who played a key role in the team’s two most recent championships. Ditka was a trailblazer at the tight end position and the most accomplished head coach in team history who is not named George Halas.

“Mike Ditka embodies the spirit of everything the Bears are about,” said Chairman of the Board George McCaskey. “He’s an icon. The last time we won the championship Mike Ditka was our coach and the last time we won before that Mike Ditka was a player.”

There is no NFL rule that specifies how many numbers a team can retire. But there are rules that mandate what numbers each position must use, and with 53 players on a game-day active roster and eight on the practice squad—plus the 14 retired numbers—that takes up 75 of the available numerals from 1 to 99.

“We do not intend to retire any more numbers,” McCaskey said, “but we thought if there is going to be a last one, there is no more appropriate one than 89.”

3 BRONKO NAGURSKI
RB-T 1930-37; 43

5 GEORGE McAFEE
RB-DB 1940-41; 45-50

7 GEORGE HALAS
E 1920-29

28 WILLIE GALIMORE
RB 1957-63

34 WALTER PAYTON
RB 1975-87

40 GALE SAYERS
RB 1965-71

41 BRIAN PICCOLO
RB 1966-69



[TRIBUNE Photo]

42 SID LUCKMAN
QB 1939-50

51 DICK BUTKUS
LB 1965-73

56 BILL HEWITT
E 1932-36

61 BILL GEORGE
LB 1952-65

66 CLYDE "BULLDOG" TURNER
C-LB 1940-52

77 HAROLD "RED" GRANGE
RB-DB 1925; 29-34

89 MIKE DITKA
TE 1961-66

A BEAR SALUTE: RETIRE NUMBERS OF GREAT TRIO

Nagurski, Grange, Hewitt
Honored by Halas



Coach George Halas (left) and Red Grange with jersey numbers retired by Bears in ceremony yesterday.

THE

GREATEST

Linebackers

The Bears have linebackers on the NFL all-decade teams of the 1950s, '60s, '70s, '80s and 2000s. Only Steelers linebackers are close, with representatives in four decades.

Bill George is given credit for inventing the modern middle-linebacker position after standing up from his middle guard (now nose tackle) spot. Successors Dick Butkus, Mike Singletary and Brian Urlacher have practically owned the position since.

1	51	Dick Butkus	1965–73	Named to Pro Football Hall of Fame all-decade teams in '60s, '70s
2	72, 61	Bill George	1952–65	17 career fumble recoveries tied for fourth-most in team history
3	54	Brian Urlacher	2000–12	41.5 career sacks, four TDs (2 on INTs, 2 on fumble recoveries)
4	50	Mike Singletary	1981–92	Started all 16 games in each of his final five seasons
5	55	Lance Briggs	2003–present	16 career interceptions, 5 of which he returned for touchdowns
6	31	Joe Fortunato	1955–66	Recovered 22 fumbles, second only to Butkus' team-record 27
7	55	Doug Buffone	1966–79	His 24 career interceptions are most by a Bears linebacker
8	81, 71	George Connor	1948–55	One of the last great two-way players, all-NFL on both sides '51-52
9	33	Larry Morris	1959–65	Member of all-decade team in '60s, was MVP in '63 title game
10	55	Otis Wilson	1980–87	36 career sacks second only to Urlacher among Bears linebackers



Dick Butkus turns to oratory when all else fails, but to no avail. The Lion touchdown stands. The Detroit Lions beat the Chicago Bears 16-10 on Oct. 25, 1970, at Wrigley Field.

1

Dick Butkus (1965-73) Butkus once expressed amusement about how his career could be boiled down to a short highlight reel. But that video is so captivating and dominating that it has come to define the position of middle linebacker and is hardly amusing to his opponents. His 22 interceptions and 27 fumble recoveries in an injury-shortened, 119-game career attest to his versatility. Only Urlacher's 22 interceptions and 15 fumble recoveries in 182 games come close to matching Butkus' turnover production.

2

Bill George (1952-65) George, Urlacher and Singletary are worthy runners-up. George had nearly as many interceptions (18) and fumble recoveries (17) as Urlacher and more than Singletary (7 and 12). George played 159 games, 23 fewer than Urlacher and 20 fewer than Singletary. George played in two championship games.

THE **Chicago Tribune** BOOK OF THE

CHICAGO BEARS

A DECADE-BY-DECADE HISTORY

For nearly a century, the *Chicago Tribune's* dedicated sports department has been documenting the storied history of the Chicago Bears—from its humble beginnings as one of the NFL's original teams to its current status as one of the league's most popular and valued franchises—with devoted reporting, live-action photography, and detailed accounts of each game.

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